DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 369 CG 029 944

AUTHOR Tam, Wai-Cheong Carl; Shiah, Yung-Jong; Chiang, Shih-Kuang
TITLE The Separation-Individuation Process and Culture: A Study on Taiwan's College Students.
PUB DATE 1998-12-00
NOTE 7p.; In: "Relating in a Global Community." Proceedings of the International Conference on Counseling in the 21st Century (7th, Sydney, Australia, December 29-31,1998); see CG 029 933.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Chinese; Chinese Culture; College Students; Cultural Differences; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Individual Development; *Student Adjustment; *Student Behavior; *Western Civilization
IDENTIFIERS Separation (Psychology); *Taiwan

ABSTRACT

The separation-individuation process of individuals is mediated by cultural factors of the society to which the individuals belong. Since the Chinese culture emphasizes collectivism rather than the individualism of Western culture, it is believed that there are differences in the separation-individuation process of individuals between the two cultures. A questionnaire was administered to 487 Taiwan college students using the Separation-Individuation Process Inventory, and the Chinese Lai's Personality Inventory, which can discriminate maladjusted college students from the well-adjusted ones. The results indicate that in spite of the mean score of the sample being higher than that of the American counterparts, most of the Taiwan subjects were well-adjusted to college life without significant psychological or interpersonal problems. It argues that the separation-individuation process of the Taiwan college students is mediated by the Chinese culture that has a different value system from the Western culture. The research also suggests that this could have an impact on the counseling process which involves Chinese clients. (Contains 35 references.) (JDM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
W. Evraiff
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

The Separation-Individuation Process and Culture: A Study on Taiwan's College Students

Wai-Cheong Carl Tam[1], Yung-Jong Shiah[2], and Shih-Kuang Chiang[3]

[1]Department of Psychology, Chung Yuan Christian University, Taiwan
[2]Student Counseling Center, National Central University, Taiwan
[3]Yu Li Veterans Hospital, Taiwan

ED 439 369

Abstract

Research indicates that the separation-individuation process of individuals are mediated by cultural factors of the society in which the individuals belong to. As the Chinese culture emphasizes collectivism rather than individualism of the western culture, it is believed that there are differences in the separation-individuation process of individuals between the two cultures. In this study, a questionnaire, including the Separation-Individuation Process Inventory(S-IPI), and the Chinese Lai's Personality Inventory, which can discriminate maladjusted college students from the well-adjusted ones, were administered to 487 Taiwan college students. Results indicate that in spite of the S-IPI mean score of the sample is higher than that of the American counterpart, most of the Taiwan subjects are well-adjusted to college life with no significant psychological or interpersonal problems. It is argued that the separation-individuation process of the Taiwan college students are mediated by the Chinese culture which has different value systems from the western culture. This might have an impact on the counseling process which involves Chinese clients.

The importance of the issue of separation-individuation (S-I) process, which was postulated systematically by Mahler, Rice , and Bergman (1975), is well-known in disciplines such as psychology, counseling, and human development. The S-I process is found to be related to adjustment to college (Holmbeck & Wandrei, 1993; Lapslay, Rice, & Shadid, 1989; Palladino Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994a), identity formation (Lopez, Watkins, Manus, & Hunton-Shoup, 1992; Palladino Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994b), career development (Blustein, Walbridge, Friedlander, & Palladino, 1991), personality characteristics (Shiah, Tam, & Chiang, 1998), and psychosocial rehabilitation (Schneider, 1992). On the other hand, difficulties encountered in the S-I process of patients with borderline personality disorder have often been discussed in the psychopathology and treatment of this disorder (DuBrul, 1989; Coonerty, 1986; McWilliams, 1979; Muller, 1992).

There are two commonly used inventories designed to study the S-I process: the Separation-Individuation Process Inventory (S-IPI) constructed by Christenson and Wilson (1985), and the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence (SITA) established by Levine, Green, and Millon (1986). The former (S-IPI) is a 39-item inventory and the discussion of its reliability and validity can be found in Christenson and Wilson (1985), and Dolan, Evans, and Norton (1992). The latter (SITA) is a 100-item inventory and the discussion of its psychometrics appears in Levine et al. (1986), McClanahan and Holmbeck (1992), Levine and Saintonge (1993), Levine (1994), Holmbeck and McClanahan (1994), and Kroger and Green (1994).

Some researchers (e.g., Li, 1992; Slote, 1992) pointed out that the Eastern countries, such as China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, have a kind of integrated culture under the Confucian influence and thus the family is the basis of the individual ego structure and self image. This is quite different from the Western countries, which emphasize individualism. Tang (1992) proposed that the S-I process reflects a cultural difference as does the dominance of relation formation as a defense found among Chinese. Shiah, Tam, and Chiang (1997) found out that Taiwan high-school students had higher S-IPI scores than that of the American sample. This study further investigates the relationship between S-I process and adjustment of college students in Taiwan and may shed light on the cultural difference of the S-I process of different samples.

CG029944

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Method

Subjects

The sample includes 487 (256 male, 221 female, 10 missing data) college students from the Chung Yuan Christian University and National Central University. Their ages range from 18.42 to 31.08 (M=20.79, SD=1.69, 21 missing data).

Instruments and Procedure

The subjects were administered a self-report questionnaire and the Lai's Personality Inventory (LPI). The questionnaire, which was a minor correction of the version used in Shiah, Tam, and Chiang's (1997) study, includes the 39-item S-IPI developed by Christenson and Wilson (1985), and a 9-item self-report assessing borderline personality symptoms according to Benjamin (1993). Two items checking for subject's honesty/lying are also included. The LPI has 130 items designed to measure the scores of 13 subscales (Lai, 1997). Five personality types from A to E can be discriminated according to the scores of the subscales and both type B and E are considered to be maladjusted in daily life.

In order to enhance the cooperation of the subjects, they were first told that they had to fill in a questionnaire on interpersonal relations. They were debriefed later on the purpose of this study when data collection was completed.

Results

Regarding the reliability and validity of the S-IPI, the Cronbach's coefficient alpha of the S-IPI was 0.877, and the correlation of the scores of the S-IPI with the number of borderline personality symptoms are shown in Table 1.

Table1

Correlation of the scores of the S-IPI and the no. of borderline personality symptoms

	Total (N=487)	Male (n=256)	Female (n=221)
correlation	.4726***	.4552***	.4867***

*** $p < .001$

The means and standard deviations of the S-IPI scores and the number of borderline personality symptoms are shown in Table 2. There are no significant differences between male and female subjects for both the scores.

Table 2
Means and standard deviations of the S-IPI scores and the no. of borderline personality symptoms

	Total (N=487)		Male (n=256)		Female (n=221)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
S-IPI scores	167.09	39.89	169.15symbol 166 \f "MS LineDraw" \s 12[a] } 37.74		166.17symbol 166 \f "MS LineDraw" \s 12[a] } 41.67	
no. of borderline personality symptoms	2.70	1.85	2.69[b]	1.84	2.71[b]	1.87

Note. [a] No significant difference between male and female subjects (t = .82, p>.05).
[b] No significant difference between male and female subjects (t = -.16, p>.05).

The means and standard deviations of the S-IPI scores and the no. of borderline personality symptoms of the subjects who endorsed 5 or more borderline personality symptoms (called the borderline symptoms group, in which the subjects might have the diagnosis of borderline personality disorder) are shown in Table 3. There are no significant differences between male and female subjects for both the scores.

Table 3
Means and standard deviations of the S-IPI scores and the no. of borderline personality symptoms of the borderline symptoms group

	Total (n=94)		Male (n=51)		Female (n=41)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
S-IPI	193.45	39.03	193.59symbol 166 \f "MS LineDraw" \s 12[a] } 31.65		194.85symbol 166 \f "MS LineDraw" \s 12[a] } 46.23	
no. of borderline personality symptoms	5.56	0.70	5.45[b]	0.67	5.71[b]	0.72

Note. [a] No significant difference between male and female subjects (t = -.15, p>.05)
[b] No significant difference between male and female subjects (t = -1.77, p>.05)

The classification of subjects into different personality types according to the scores of the LPI is shown in Table 4. The mean and standard deviation of the S-IPI scores of B and E types combined are 200.85 and 37.54 respectively (median =205.50, skew = -.22).

Table 4
Classification of subjects according to LPI

	Personality types						Total
	A	B	C	D	E	mixed	
n	2	20	68	0	20	377	487

The mean and standard deviation of the S-IPI scores of subjects who are either B or E personality types and are in the borderline symptoms group are shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Mean and standard deviation of the S-IPI scores of subjects who are either B or E personality types and are in the borderline symptoms group

	n= 20	
	M	SD
S-IPI	207.65	6.68

Discussion

Results indicate that the reliability and validity of the Chinese version of the S-IPI are acceptable. Thus this instrument can be used to study the S-I process of the Taiwan population in future research.

Although the means of the S-IPI scores of Taiwan college students (male: 169.15, female: 166.17) are higher than that of the American counterpart (male: 150.18, female: 141.58, Allen & Stoltenkerg, 1995), results indicated that the S-IPI cut-off score for possible cases with borderline personality disorder or maladjustment is very close to 190 suggested by Christenson and Wilson (1985). That is say, the proposition that there are more Taiwan college students with S-I problems than American college students is not supported. At least, the results of the LPI of this study do not suggest that the students with S-IPI scores under190 are in general maladjusted. LPI was chosen to be used in this study because it is designed and constructed for the Chinese population in Taiwan and thus cultural bias may be avoided. As being mentioned above, there might be differences in the S-I process between Chinese and American cultures.

There were no gender differences found in the S-I process in this study. This is compatible with the sample of high-school students of the previous study conducted by the same authors (Shiah, Tam, & Chiang, 1997). Nevertheless, some researchers, such as Nelson (1996), Dien (1992), Allen and Stoltenberg (1995), McChrystal and Dolan (1994), argued against the gender equality of the S-I process. Future research is needed to clarify this issue.

One of the limitations of this study is the using of the LPI, which is basicly a personality inventory, as a measure of adjustment. This is because all the Chinese versions of adjustment scales used in Taiwan are either translated from foreign instruments which need further research on their reliability and validity, or with out-of-date norms. As a result, LPI was chosen as an alternative because personality types B or E of LPI are considered to have maladjusted problems (Lai, 1997). Although the constructs of adjustment and personality are not the same, it is reasonable to infer that they are correlated to some extent. It is hoped that an instrument assessing adjustment will be

developed in the near future in Taiwan and thus this instrument could be utilized in the study of S-I process. Another limitation is the lack of measurements on the subjects' acculturalization to both the Chinese and Western cultures.

Different researchers study S-I process from different points of view, such as through social-cognitive perspective (Mazon & Enright, 1988), family systems (Daniels, 1990; Gavazzi & Sabatelli, 1990; Palladino Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994b; Sabatelli & Mazon, 1985), and qualitative analysis of the S-I process (Chen, 1995). Future study may focus on the integration of all these perspectives .

Reference

Allen, S. F., & Stoltenberg, C. D. (1995). Psychological separation of older adolescents and young adults from their parents: An investigation of gender differences. *Journal of Counseling & Development,* 73(May/June), 542-546.

Benjamin, L. S. (1993). *Interpersonal diagnosis and treatment of personality disorders*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Blustein, D. L., Walbridge, M. M., Frieldlander, M. L., & Palladino, D. E. (1991). Contributions of psychological separation and parental attachment to the career development process. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 38(1)*, 39-50.

Chen, P. (1995). [A study on college students' psychological separation-individuation change in counseling]. *Bulletin of Educational Psychology, 28*, 145-176.

Christenson, R. M., & Wilson, W. P. (1985). Assessing pathology in the separation-individuation process by an inventory: A preliminary report. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease,173(9)*, 561-565.

Coonerty, S. (1986). An exploration of separation-individuation themes in the borderline personality disorder. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 50(3)*, 501-511.

Daniels, J. A. (1990). Adolescent separation-individuation and family transition. *Adolescence, 25(97)*, 105-116.

Dien, D. (1992). Gender and individuation: China and the west. *The Psychoanalytic Review, 79(1)*, 105-119.

Dolan, B. M., Evans, C., & Norton, K. (1992). The separation-individuation inventory: Association with borderline phenomena. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease,180(8)*, 529-533.

DuBrul, T. (1989). Separation-individuation roller coaster in the therapy of a borderline patient. *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care, 25(3,4)*, 10-13.

Gavazzi, S. M., & Sabatelli, R. M. (1990). Family system dynamics, the individuation process, and psychosocial development. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 5(4)*, 500-519.

Holmbeck, G. N., & McClanahan, G. (1994). Construct and content validity of the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence: A reply to Levine. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 62(1)*, 169-172.

Holmbeck, G. N., & Wandrei, M. L. (1993). Individual and relational predictors of adjustment in first-year college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 40(1)*, 73-78.

Kroger, J., & Green, K. (1994). Factor analytic structure and stability of the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 50(5)*, 772-785.

Lai, P. C. (1997). *Manual of Lai's Personality Inventory*. Taipei, Taiwan: Chian Hua Publishing Company .

Lapsley, D. K., Rice, K. G., & Shadid, G. E. (1989). Psychological separation and adjustment to college. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 36(3)*, 286-294.

Levine, J. B. (1994). On McClanahan and Holmbeck's construct validity study of the Separation-

Individuation Test of Adolescence. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 62(1)*, 166-168.
Levine, J. B., Green, C. J., & Millon, T. (1986). The Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 50*, 123-137.
Levine, J. B., & Saintonge, S. (1993). Psychometric properties of the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence within a clinical population. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 49(4)*, 492-507.
Li, M. (1992). Cultural difference and ingroup favoritism: A comparison of Chinese and American College Students. *Bulletin of Academia Sinica*, 73, 153-190.
Lopez, F. G., Watkins, C. E., Jr. Manus, M. & Hunton-Shoup, J.(1992). Conflictual independence, mood regulation, and generalized self-efficacy: test of a model of late-adolescent identity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 39(3)*, 375-381.
Nelson, M. L. (1996). Separation versus connection, the gender controversy: Implications for counseling women. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 74(March/April)*, 542-546.
Mahler, M., Pine, F., & Bergman, A. (1975). *The psychological birth of the human infant.* New York: Basic Books.
Mazor, A., & Enright, R. D. (1988). The development of the individuation process from a social-cognitive perspective. *Journal of Adolescence, 11*, 29-47.
McChrystal, J., & Dolan, B. (1994). Sex-role identity and separation-individuation pathology. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly, 7(1)*, 25-34.
McClanahan, G., & Holmbeck, G. N. (1992). Separation-individuation, family functioning, and psychological adjustment in college students: A construct validity study of the separation-individuation test of adolescence. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 59(3)*, 465-485.
McWilliams, N. (1979). Treatment of the young borderline patient: Fostering individuation against the odds. *The Psychoanalytic Review, 66(3)*, 339-357.
Muller, R. J. (1992). Is there a neural basis for borderline splitting? *Comprehensive Psychiatry, 33(2)*, 92-104.
Palladino Schultheiss, D. E., & Blustein, D. L. (1994a). Role of adolescent-parent relationships in college student development and adjustment. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 41(2)*, 248-255.
Palladino Schultheiss, D. E., & Blustein, D. L. (1994b). Contributions of family relationship factors to the identity formation process. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 73(November/December)*, 159-166.
Sabatelli, R. M., & Mazor, A. (1985). Differentiation, individuation, and identity formation: The integration of family system and individual developmental perspectives. *Adolescence, 20(79)*, 619-633.
Schneider, S.(1992). Separation and individuation issues in psychological rehabilitation. *Adolescence, 27(105)*, 137-144.
Shiah, Y.-C., Tam, W.-C. C., & Chiang, S.-K. (1997, May). Separation-individuation process of high-school students in Taiwan and its implications in counseling. Paper presented at the 6th International Conference on Counseling, Beijing, China.
Slote, W. H. (1992). Oedipal ties and the issue of the separation-individuation in traditional Confucian societies. *Journal of the American academy of Psychoanalysis, 20(3)*, 435-453.
Tang, N. M. (1992). Some psychoanalytic implications of Chinese philosophy and child-rearing practices. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 47*, 371-389.